Re-Imagining the Role of General Council in a Modern CMA
The General Task Force (GCTF) is seeking your ideas and insights to help us re-imagine the role of General Council in a modern Canadian Medical Association.

We want to know from you how a re-imagined General Council may best support a national policy development process by more broadly and effectively engaging the expertise and experience of our members from across Canada.

We are looking for the most innovative ways to engage our members - so please think outside the box and share with us your most creative ideas.

In what follows, you will find background information about General Council, some guiding principles that are informing this reflection, and several key questions that you may consider.

We welcome your thoughts and ideas and encourage you to send your comments to:

Amy Baldry, Project Manager, General Council Task Force
Canadian Medical Association
amy.baldry@cma.ca
613-731-8610 x/poste 8218.

Iain Scott (ON)
Chair, General Council Task Force
About CMA’s Policy Process and General Council’s Role

Making good health and health care policy is an ongoing process that requires input from a broad diversity of perspectives over time and across a broad array of issues. As the national voice of Canada's current and future physicians, the Canadian Medical Association engages its members throughout the year to define and champion the highest standards in health and health care.

CMA's General Council is intended to play a key role in this process by engaging members and thought leaders from across Canada – in-person and online – in an impactful dialogue to discuss and develop health and health care policy.

Currently, General Council is an annual gathering of a select group of physicians. Health decision makers and the media also attend General Council to observe the proceedings – a testament to physicians’ leadership in Canada’s health care system and health policy. General Council attendees participate in education sessions, engage in policy discussions on emerging issues, and also debate and vote on motions to provide policy guidance to the CMA Board.

The conversations at General Council have, at times, shaped the CMA’s policy direction and have also had considerable impact on issues of pressing concern to Canadians and to health care professionals not only in Canada, but across the world. Some recent notable examples include courageous dialogue and positions on:

- Assisted dying and end of life care
- Marijuana for medical purposes
- Opioids in pain management

However, a significant majority of CMA members are unaware of General Council or have a limited understanding of how it can effectively advance matters relating to the general health and welfare of the public, the profession or the Association.

We want to build the future success of General Council so that the CMA continues to tackle the most strategic issues of the day, nurtures the leadership role of physicians and serves Canada as a powerful policy-making driver. To achieve this, we need to expand the reach of the General Council, make it more accessible, engage a greater diversity of physicians and increase its impact throughout the year.

Guiding Principles for a Re-Imagined General Council

Our opportunity is to determine how we can broaden the reach and impact of General Council in support of a policy process led by the CMA that moves the needle on Canadian health care by fully mobilizing the expertise and energy of CMA members.

The CMA’s Board believes that the purpose of a re-imagined General Council should be to “engage innovatively and inclusively in courageous and influential dialogue to advance health in Canada”.

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This purpose statement implies that a re-imagined General Council must be:

- **INNOVATIVE** – Today’s challenges are impacting health care and the profession. Innovation and new ways of thinking (outside the lines) needs to be a priority.

- **INCLUSIVE** – We need numbers to make an impact and we need all physicians to join in and take part. Not just a few hundred, not even a couple of thousand but we need tens of thousands to be engaged.

- **COURAGEOUS** – We will need to have brave and courageous conversations that will allow us to uncover and address the real issues. Courage at all levels to have those difficult conversations.

- **INFLUENTIAL** – We can have as much conversation and dialogue as we want but if we are not making an impact and we do not have an influence then... What is the point? Being influential is important.

This vision expands beyond seeing General Council as an annual event and focuses on the imperative need to find creative ways to mobilize and engage physicians, medical residents and medical students across the country and across the professional spectrum on issues of importance to them and to the patients they serve.

**Questions for Consideration**

We welcome your ideas and insights on the following questions... And remember: there are no sacred cows!

1. What are your expectations of the CMA as the national voice of Canada’s current and future physicians when it comes to defining and championing the highest standards in health and health care policy in Canada?

2. How and to what extent would you expect to participate in the CMA’s policy-making process, whether through General Council or through other means?

3. What role do you see for an in-person and virtual meeting like General Council in the CMA’s policy-making process?

4. How can we broaden the reach and impact of CMA meetings like General Council to engage a greater number and diversity of physicians, medical residents and medical students?

5. How can we prioritize the issues addressed by the CMA in forums like General Council to ensure we focus our attention on critical or emerging issues that impact the profession and the patients we serve?

6. How can we make CMA meetings like General Council a more inclusive and accessible gathering space, both physically and virtually (e.g. through the strategic and effective use of technology)?

7. Do you have any other comments or suggestions relating to the form or function of General Council given that its aspirational purpose is to “engage innovatively and inclusively in courageous and influential dialogue to advance health care in Canada”?

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